

Chapter 2

European Colonization in Kerala - A Historical Analysis

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CHAPTER - 2

European Colonization in Kerala - A Historical Analysis

2.1 Introduction

India, a country of sub-continental size, has been a veritable melting pot of races and cultures. Each ethnic strain has contributed in some measure to the Indian ethos. "The issue of understanding India's traditional and social institutions and values as part of understanding the specifics of Indian civilization has acquired an urgency in the context of India's transition to a colonial society, economy and polity. The rediscovery of India by the Indian intelligentsia meant essentially the understanding of the nature of Indian social institutions and values and the changes introduced therein by the impact of British colonialism."¹ The social structure of Kerala and India as a whole changed rapidly under the influence of Europeans who settled on the continent for commercial or religious purposes.

The westernization of Kerala started with the arrival of European merchants. The presence of these merchants in Kerala was the main causative factor in creating such a varied culture. "European commercial, economic and political interests found their way to different countries of the East, subordinating their institutions, ideas, economies, cultures, political systems and practices, in short, the whole way of life of the peoples to the needs of each individual maritime power".² The imposition of a commercial economy on a simple, primitive economy based on agricultural production,

¹ Joshi P. C., Article on *The remembered Village: Insights into an Agrarian Civilisation, Social Structure and Change*, vol. 1, 127.

² P. N. Chopra, T. K. Ravindran and N. Subrahmanian, *History of South India*, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1979), 1.

together with the imposition of imperialism, was the aggregate outcome of the European invasion. The great colonial powers of the world such as Portugal, Holland, Denmark, France, and England formed trading companies and established close commercial bond with India and other Eastern countries which had lasting influences in Kerala 's economy and culture. They found Kerala the best base to operate their business especially in spices, textiles, and tea, and were not averse to even investing capital here.

2.2 Portuguese in India

A new era in the history of India may be said to have begun in 1498, when Vasco Da Gama's fleet of three ships, anchored off Calicut. The arrival of the Portuguese on the Malabar Coast constituted an important epoch in the history of India in general and Kerala in particular. The landing of Vasco Da Gama at Kappad, Calicut, in May 1498 marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Kerala.³ The sea-route to India had been discovered bringing India into contact with modern European civilization. In popular mythology the Portuguese contribution to the development of India has often seemed to be narrowed down to just two people-Vasco Da Gama, a dauntless navigator and, to Europeans 'discoverer' of India, and Albuquerque, the creator, by terror and the sword of a brief sea-borne Portuguese empire in Asia.⁴ The strength, resilience, stability and permanence of Portuguese power were very impressive. They controlled the complete social and political system of the areas in which they settled to facilitate their trade and business to the best advantage. Even though the

³. The European epoch inaugurated by Vasco Da Gama, thus brought about a transformation in the state system, Economy and social order of Asian nations. This was made possible by the thrust of commercial economy over a simple, primitive economy based on agricultural production and internal trade and active interposition of imperialism. Ibid. 1.

⁴. A. L. Bastian (ed.), *A Cultural History of India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1975), 337.

immediate aim of the Portuguese was the expansion of trade and commerce, they also kept in mind, a vision of building an empire in India by subjugating the local rulers who were quarrelling with each other at that time.

2.3 Portuguese Settlements

The Portuguese occupied some sixty miles of coastal India around Goa, with territories stretching up to thirty miles inland. Their dominion extended northwards from Bombay to Damao, the key with Diu across the Gulf, to the approaches to Gujarat. Southwards they had a long chain of seaport fortresses and trading posts –Onor, Barcelor, Mangalore, Cannanore, Cranganore, Cochin and Quilon. On the East coast at Nagapatnam and Santhome further military posts and settlements were created and during the sixteenth century a wealthy settlement grew at Hugli in Bengal. During the rule of Almeida, Albuquerque helped them to establish settlements in these areas and also to promote the trade. When Gama landed in Calicut, Zamorin, the most powerful prince of Kerala was the ruler of this that principality. Zamorin extended freedom of religion and commerce to all peoples, indigenous and foreign.

The first Portuguese adventurer to India was Joao Peres de Covilhao who reached Cannanore on the Malabar Coast in a Moorish ship from where he collected rich natural resources. Vasco Da Gama landed at Kappad near Calicut on 17 May 1498. He returned from Kerala on 20 November. From the political and economic points of view Gama's arrival was a great tragedy for India, for it opened the floodgate of continuing ingress of European invaders in the following centuries. Princely states one after the other fell victims to these alien aggressors and Kerala became a sport of their treacherous designs

till the British established their supremacy here.⁵ Pedro Alvarez Cabral followed the expedition of Vasco Da Gama. During the course of his voyage the Portuguese captured several Arab vessels moored in the Calicut port. Vasco Da Gama who made a second voyage acted more ruthlessly than Cabral. He bombarded the city of Calicut when the Zamorin refused his demand to expel the Arabs⁶ He even dared to proclaim that the Portuguese King enjoyed the ownership over Indian waters.⁷ Francisco de Almeda who reached Calicut as the first Portuguese Viceroy also followed a policy of hostility towards the Zamorin and the Muslim traders. Alfonso de Albuquerque who followed Almeda as the Portuguese Governor possessed a very clear vision of a Portuguese empire in India. He adopted several administrative measures for the establishment of an empire rather than for boosting their trade relations with India.

By the end of the 16th century the Portuguese power on land in Malabar had declined. The Dutch challenged their supremacy on the sea.⁸ The Zamorin and many small Princes in the region looked to them for driving away the cruel Portuguese and in a pitched battle in January 1663 the combined forces of the Dutch and the Zamorin defeated the Portuguese at Cochin. Thus ended the hundred and sixty five years of Portuguese relation with Kerala. Even during those years their influence was felt only at Cochin, Purakkad and Quilon.⁹ The Portuguese contact with Kerala produced far-reaching consequences not only in the commercial fields, but also in the military, political, social and religious fields. With the advent of the

⁵. Op. cit. no. 2, 3.

⁶. A Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, (Madras: S. Viswanathan Publishers, 2000), 220.

⁷. Velayudhan Panikkasseri, *Portuguese-Dutch Adhipatyam Keralathil* (Mal), (Kottayam: Current Books, 2004), 52.

⁸. K. M. Panniker, *A History of Kerala*, (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University Press, 1960), 131.

⁹. Op. cit. no. 2, 11-12.

Portuguese, the number of petty states increased, the old methods of warfare yielded place to new, fire-arms became common, and fortifications assumed an important role in defending the principalities administered by the Malabar Princes. The Portuguese strategy was to favour small principalities and encourage them to rise against their overloads; this was necessary for them to gain commercial advantage at little cost. Through this strategy the Portuguese succeeded in establishing their footholds in the places like Kannur, Purakkad, Cranganore, Calicut, Cochin and Kollam.¹⁰ The Portuguese failed to establish an efficient administrative system in their pockets in Kerala. Even though they had efficient administrators like Albuquerque, his followers were not wise enough to continue his reforms. To him goes the credit of initiating such administrative reforms as the 'Mixed colony system',¹¹ prohibition of *Sati* practice, introduction of European methods in administration and the introduction of a fresh coinage and the efficient judicial system. In religious affairs the Portuguese were extremely fanatical and narrow minded. They reduced the Syrian Church of Kerala into subjection to the Romanists. Besides commercial gains, the Portuguese aimed at the latinisation of Christianity and the conversion of the entire population to that faith. However in Kerala, excepting the Latin liturgy and rites in the Roman Catholic Church nothing of their legacy remains. The Portuguese had avowed commercial intentions and they combined these with pro-latinisation. Their settlements along the Coast were centres of trade and spear points for Roman Catholic conversion. The fourth chapter will explain more about the religious missions of Portuguese in Kerala. They intermarried

¹⁰ T. I. Poonen, *Keralathil Porthuguesukarude Anthyagatham* (Mal), (Cheruthuruthi: Vallathol Publishers, 1967), 4.

¹¹ Through this system he patronized the matrimonial relations between the Portuguese persons and natives.

with the local inhabitants so much so their descendants came to be called “Eurasians” who now come under name of Anglo- Indians. Their contributions to Indian languages included such words as ‘Firingi’ for ‘Foreigner’, ‘Lelam’ for ‘Auction’, ‘Kurishu’ for ‘Cross’, and ‘Varantha’ for ‘Verandas’. A Portuguese dialect is still spoken in some parts of Cochin. The Portuguese also introduced tobacco raising and smoking.¹²

2.4 Trade Policy of the Portuguese

The advent of the Portuguese put an end to the trade monopoly of the Arabs on the Indian coast, especially in Malabar. There were a number of Muslim merchants from Arabia and Egypt who had settled in Calicut and had carried on a lucrative trade for six centuries before the arrival of the Portuguese. Trade prospered on the western coast of India with the arrival of the Portuguese. It is related that when they first landed at Calicut, one of them was asked what they had come for and replied. “We have come to seek Christians and Spices”.¹³ The answer was a succinct definition of the two objectives that the Portuguese had in view, one missionary and the other commercial. The intention of the Portuguese community in India was to monopolize the spice trade and to Christianise the people of this region. They were crusaders aiming on the one hand, to propagate the Christian faith, and on the other to control the sea-borne trade of India, of which the trade in spices was the most important. The Governor of Goa said in 1545 that they had come to India with a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other, and the spirit of their rule seems to be typified by a figure sculptured

¹². Andrew John Bucher, *An Inquiry into some major factors of European efficiency in the tropics with special reference to missionaries in the Travancore-Cochin State*, Unpublished Ph. D Thesis, (Thiruvananthapuram: University of Kerala, 1950), 8-9.

¹³. L. S. S. O'Malley, (ed.), *Modern India and the West: A Study of the Interaction of their Civilisation*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 44.

on the Viceroy's arch at Goa, that of a saint whose foot is on the neck of a prostrate Indian and whose hand holds a drawn sword pointing towards India.

Thus during the sixteenth century the Portuguese dominated the sea-borne trade and on the western sea-board there were not merely trading stations but also fortified naval bases, in which they exercised sovereign powers. The Mughals had no sea power; even Akbar had to get authorization from the Portuguese to send his ships to the Red Sea. The Portuguese succeeded in realizing their mercantile ambitions by means of naval power. Their aim was to establish trade centers in most of the coastal areas of Malabar and Cochin and Calicut became the most prosperous city of South India. They introduced a new method of trade *Cartaz*, which was unjust and hated by the indigenous population. The system of *Cartaz* allowed the Portuguese to dominate and control sea-borne trade. If other merchants wanted to trade by sea, they had to purchase a permit issued by the Portuguese. This permit was issued for one year on payment of a fee, which varied according to the capacity of the ship to carry cargo. Till the beginning of 19th the century Indian sea-trade was severely affected by the *Cartaz* menace. *Cartaz* specified the details of a vessel such as tonnage capacity, name, owner, home port, persons on board, and the defence personnel, etc. The Portuguese destroyed the ships of enemy merchants and confiscated their cargos. These activities were carried out not with the intention to destroy Indian business but to control it and to channel use it to their own advantage. They won the right exclusive rights to oceanic trade for which they committed piracy and plunder. The rulers of Cochin, Purakkad, Quilon and Calicut were treated with indignity as though they were the servants of the King of Portugal and allowed the Portuguese to exercise effective

political and commercial control in their lands. The Portuguese gained a lot from foreign trade. They received a yearly subsidy in gold. Thus the Portuguese territories were intended to be outposts of their empire and their religion, with their laws and customs imposed on the inhabitants.

The Portuguese presence in Goan community brought about a transformation in the socio-cultural sphere of the Goan society during the early 19th century. But the Portuguese could not enjoy much political influence or unquestioned commercial power in India, except in Goa. They used Goa as a centre from they could to operate their business across the sea. Their supremacy power in Goa was undisputed. The *Cartaz* were issued from Goa. They operated a flourishing sea-trade from Goan ports. Their permanent presence was instrumental in establishing Portuguese cultural influence in India.¹⁴ In Goa and the Province of North they established themselves as village landlords. They built new roads and dug irrigation canals. The territorial settlements of the Portuguese in Goa helped them to command the trade and commercial operations in these areas but it should be noted that the approach of the Portuguese towards trade was very different from that of other European colonists in India. They gained ascendancy in their trading operations on the Indian coast and in Indian waters by displacing peaceful competition with violent compulsion. The plunder and piracy of the Portuguese adversely affected the security of the completely changed the commercial operations of the region. Thus the seeds of imperialist smugness scattered in the winds grew up in the following years encouraged other western colonialists to pursue their own sea trade ambitions along India's coasts.

¹⁴. Op. cit. no. 4, 338.

2.5 Agriculture

The Portuguese promoted agricultural expansion in Kerala. They introduced new crops such as tobacco and cashew nut, and planted superior plantation varieties of coconut. The tobacco plant was introduced early in the seventeenth century and quickly became naturalized in spite of Shajahan's edict prohibiting tobacco smoking on the ground that it had 'a very bad effect upon the health and mind of many persons'. The use of the leaf for smoking spread rapidly. Nobles and beggars, the pious and the wicked, devotees and free-thinkers, poets, historians, rhetoricians, doctors and patients, high and low, rich and poor, all seemed intoxicated with a decided preference for it over every other luxury, even at the expense of life's necessities.¹⁵

The Portuguese followed regional and geographical priorities in promoting agriculture and trade in Kerala. In Malabar the cultivation of pepper, ginger and cinnamon was extended almost to its natural limits. There was a high demand for coir products and so systematic planting of coconut groves in coastal areas was undertaken and in the weaving centres of Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal built textile production units to meet the demand from European countries. They also promoted an interchange of goods and styles within India itself. Tobacco was one of their earliest introductions to be carried to the Deccan plateau in 1508. The common fruit papaya, which came from the Spanish Indies was yet another contribution of the Portuguese. The cashew nut, maize, peanuts from Africa, the mandioca from which tapioca is made. The Portuguese also introduced sweet potatoes and red chillies in this land. They introduced medicinal and decorative

¹⁵. Op. cit. no. 13, 48.

plants too and took the initiative in the dissemination of Asian plants like mangosteen, sweet orange, lichees etc. in new places within Asia.

2.6 Languages and Literature

The Portuguese played a dominant role in enriching the Indian languages. In the island of Goa and adjacent Bardes and Salsette the Portuguese language itself came to be spoken by virtually all the people. To reach out to the Hindu population that they might be converted to Christianity, they learned and promoted Konkani and Marathi languages, which helped them a great deal on their missionary and pastoral work. Later, however, fearing that the Hindu ideas and sentiments would retain their influence as long as the language the medium of expression survived they turned hostile to the native tongues, which ultimately led to a viceregal decree in 1684 enjoining parish priests and school –teachers to instruct the people in Portuguese ‘so that in course of time the Portuguese idioms will be familiar to one and all, to the exclusion of the mother tongue.’¹⁶ The Archbishop followed suit and issued an order in 1812 that the children in the parish schools should speak Portuguese in school hours. It was implemented in the Goan territories and also in the Province of North, Mangalore and Cochin, South of Goa, and even in the east coast territory of Nagapatnam. The Portuguese were very strict in keeping the private devotions and cathedral records in Portuguese until the twentieth century. During the eighteenth century, the employees of the East India Company were required to learn Portuguese in order to facilitate the performance of their administrative functions. When English people first arrived in Surat they made use of the services of Portuguese speaking Indian brokers for buying

¹⁶. Op. cit. no. 4, 342.

and selling purposes. Thus the dominance of the Portuguese language in Indian territories had far reaching results. The words used in North Indian languages for room, table, bucket, key, etc. were inducted into Portuguese language generously.

The Portuguese were bent on promoting Indian literature and languages though the motive behind this promotion was to felicitate their missionary work, and they were very successful in the forming of grammars and the compilation of dictionaries of Indian languages. Francis Xavier, the Jesuit missionary made a manual of grammar and vocabulary to learn the language of Malabar, and he stated that "Malabar" is as easily learnt as "Latin". Thomas Stephen, another Jesuit priest is best known for his *Christian Purana* in the "Konkani" language and has also produced a book on grammar *Arte da lingua canarin*, later enlarged by Diego Riberio. All the three were behind the introduction of the printing press in India. The first book in Bengali, printed in Roman script, was a grammatical work. To the missionary the ability to use the language of his flock was undoubtedly fundamental. He used it to attract the audience to him and to strengthen the faith of the converted. Thus the Portuguese found it a strong foothold to promote their language, and compiled vocabularies and glossaries in Indian languages.

2.7 Social and Cultural Changes

The sixteenth century witnessed a socio-cultural transition in India. The rich culture and tradition of the nation were greatly changed consequent on the advent of western ideas and customs especially in the arts, music and literature. Thus the colonial disposition superseded the attitudes of the

indigenous society and this acted as springboard for great social and cultural changes in India.

In Goa, the Hindu songs of Goa, the *vovios*, and the *dakhinu*, (songs) of Muslim dancing girls, were banned on the orders of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1536. This Inquisition was established in Goa in 1560. The music of Portugal was taught in parish schools and seminaries. They established music schools and university chairs at Coimbra and Evora. Jesuit missionaries built schools and colleges to teach not only the Christian doctrine but also to train dancers and musicians. The trained students from these schools performed musical programmes to celebrate feasts in the Jesuits' Chapel at the Mughal Court as well as in parish services. The songs like *vilhancico* and the *loa*, sung by women at weddings, or in the *mando*, the languid, two part dance, sung by Christians of Goa in Konkani were among the popular musical forms of Portuguese India. Thus, Goa provided most of the interpreters and players of Western music in India.

The missionaries and churchmen were also teachers and patrons in India of painters, carvers and sculptures.¹⁷ The Jesuit mission in north India sustained these artists. Abu'l Fazl, Akbar's biographer and minister wrote of 'the wonderful works of European painters who have attained world-wide fame'. The Portuguese had a vibrant artistic tradition and this had a profound effect on Indian art. The art galleries were filled with portraits of governors-general and viceroys, but the most influential works were those, which adorned churches and chapels. There was an abundance of paintings in the Jesuits chapels in Agra and Lahore. It is recorded that the Mughal emperors possessed paintings of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, the Crucifixion

¹⁷. Ibid. 344.

and the Madonna and Child and even the sketches made of the interior decorations of the Jesuit church at Lahore. "The church interiors of Portuguese India were renowned for the lavishness of their decoration, especially in the elaborate gilding of woodwork carved on the ceilings. They decorated churches with cherubs, festooned and swaged, starred and diamonded, now channeled, now octagonal, twined about with vines and creepers. The Goan cathedral chalices, with their open fretted foil work and bejeweled hafts, or the reliquaries of Verna and Margao, combining Renaissance forms with the decorated, jewel encrusted works of local artists, were fine examples of Portuguese artistic performance".¹⁸ The tomb of Francis Xavier was built in the form of a silver casket of Italian design, worked by Goan silversmiths. The Portuguese church provided the earliest introduction to European architectural ideas over the whole length of India. Their domestic architecture—the long, two-storied house, with high-pitched roof, balconies and verandas often running the whole length of the building, many windowed, with inside *sala*, or saloon, its walls lined with chairs and sofas, elaborately carved or inlaid –still survive not only in Goa but in other parts of modern India. The buildings like churches, schools, seminaries and houses built by the Portuguese have an elegant beauty and even the new generation follows this heavily mullioned way of construction.

In spite of their elegant buildings and love of music and art there was a barbaric side to the Portuguese character. Vandalism could perhaps best describe this characteristic. Piracy, robbery, and plunder were part of their culture but in the eyes of the Hindu Kings these traits were regarded as contemptuous, and irreligious.¹⁹ They imposed their laws and manners on

¹⁸. Ibid. 345.

¹⁹. Op. cit. no. 2, 23.

the inhabitants. Colonization was effected not so much by immigration as by marriage with Indian women. There was no colour bar, and the children of mixed marriages bore no stigma of inferiority. Albuquerque, the terror banned certain customs of the Hindu religion. Sati and infanticide were prohibited. The people of the country were kept in subjugation but this was never openly admitted to except by law agents, solicitors or writers. Thus colonization impacted radically on the ethos, customs, social values and laws of the Indian population

2.8 Religious Policy

As we have seen in the previous sections, the chief propaganda tool of the Portuguese in India and Kerala was Christianity. In fourth chapter we will have more detailed study about it. They succeeded in introducing the Roman Catholic form of Christianity in their own territories and in its expansion inland by means of missionaries. Proselytization began soon after the capture of Goa and the persecution in 1540 under the orders of the fanatical John III. The spread of Christianity was assisted by an appeal to material interests. "Converts were to be provided with posts in the customs service, exempted from being press ganged into the navy, and supported by the distribution of rice – the first record of what have been called 'Rice-Christians'".²⁰ In 1560 the Inquisition was introduced here and an officer of that body was posted in each of the Portuguese towns with power to arrest any person who said or did anything opposed to the Catholic faith, and send him to Goa where the Inquisitor General tried him. Thus the Portuguese had two objectives in view- the one missionary and the other commercial. The Portuguese rulers helped the missionaries of the Franciscan and Dominican

²⁰. Op. cit. no. 13, 45.

orders to establish schools, seminaries and churches with the intention to preach the gospel of God and to convert the Hindu community. Though the Portuguese failed to leave a lasting legacy in the political life or the administrative system of India, they did succeed in introducing a permanent schism between the branches of Christianity. They controlled forcefully large numbers of converts in the coastal areas of Goa, Cochin, Calicut, Cannanoore and Mangalore. Latinisation of Christianity and the conversion of the entire populations were the twin aims of the Portuguese besides the promotion of commerce. The Franciscans and later the Jesuits did everything from coaxing to harassing and burning, to spread the Holy faith and convert the locals.²¹ The King of Portugal instructed the Viceroys to provide all possible political aid to bishops and priests to convert the people and also to eliminate idol worship in their regions. Thus the Viceroy was “to discover with the help of diligent officers, all the idols and demolish them and break them up in pieces where they are found proclaiming severe punishments against anyone who shall dare to work, cast, make in sculpture, engrave, paint or bring to light any figure of an idol.... Or bring them from other places; and against who publicly or privately celebrate any of their sports, or assist and hide the Brahmins, the sworn enemies of Christianity. It is our pleasure that you punish them with that severity of the law without admitting any appeal or dispensation in the least.”²² Portuguese rulers destroyed Hindu temples and also opposed the Muslim community. The Portuguese also turned against the Syrian Christians who obeyed the Nestorian patriarch as against the Roman Church. They forcefully compelled the Christians of Kerala to follow the Roman church practices.

²¹. Op. cit. no. 2, 19.

²². Ibid. 219.

They trained Syrian priests to follow Latin practices and faith in their chapels. This approach of the Portuguese led to a clash between Syrian and Roman Christians. The non-Catholics of the Malabar region could not tolerate it. So they persuaded the non Catholic Christians to gather at Mattancherry in front of the Coonan Cross in January 1653 and made a pledge that they would never follow the Syrian Christians or the Roman Catholics. They had secured the Dutch support to this move. This group of non Catholic Christians later followed the Patriarch of Antioch. This event marked the beginning of a schism, which had far reaching effects on the religious life of Keralites during that period and even down to the present day.

The result of this schism was the creation of a multi-faceted society in the coastal areas of Goa, Kerala and North East India. The missionaries gained a deep-rooted influence amongst the fisher-folk and other low caste people of Kerala. The followers of Francis Xavier were large in number and their propaganda became active among the Hindu community. Between 1557 and 1610 the Portuguese established dioceses at Cochin, Mailapur and Cranganore. The Jesuits established schools, colleges and seminaries in many parts of the region. They were pioneers in promoting language and literature and also in compiling dictionaries and vocabularies in Indian languages. They knew that education was the best instrument of conversion. Jesuits also had missionary excursions in Agra, Patna and even in Nepal.

The Portuguese created terror and violence in order to propagate Christianity in their territories. They imprisoned, tortured and condemned to the flames, people they felt to be opponents of the Catholic faith. They destroyed Hindu temples and confiscated their lands. They banned Hindu

festivals, songs, ceremonies and even forced the handing over of Hindu and Muslim orphans to be brought up as Christians. A Muslim historian commented on it as “of all their odious practices, the worst”. In conclusion it can be stated that the prime intention of the Portuguese in India was to bring Christianity, by whatever means, to this sub-continent and they mobilised all their forces, political, administrative, economic and commercial to make this venture successful. Thus the most visible contribution of the Portuguese to India is the community of Indian Roman (Latin) Catholics. The existing western predominance in Goa, Calicut, Mangalore, Cochin, North East India and other West Ghats areas are the perceivable monuments of the Portuguese occupancy in ancient India.

2.9 The Dutch

The arrival of the Dutch in India in 1602 turned the tide against the Portuguese. In March of that year the Netherlands formed the Dutch East India Company with the aim of establishing commercial relations with India. It was very clear that “the policy of the Dutch was more strictly commercial than that of the Portuguese. Like the latter they realized that factories, i.e. trade depots, had to be defended by forts, but their objective was to gain a command of trade and not territorial dominion, political power or religious conversion. They had no desire to impose their creed or customs on the people with whom they had commercial relations”²³. As soon as the Dutch reached India, they signed a treaty with the Zamorin of Calicut to work together to expel the Portuguese from Indian Territory. On 16th October 1608, the combined forces of the Dutch and the Zamorin joined together for the “ruin and destruction of the Portuguese”. Portugal's firmly

²³. Op. cit. no. 13, 48.

established presence and relations with local rulers made it difficult for the Dutch to capture power from them. But the fanatical religious approach of the Portuguese and their political interference helped the Dutch to create a climate of dislike against them. In 1619 the Dutch entered into an alliance with the English for ousting the Portuguese from Kerala waters. Accordingly a combined fleet was sent in 1621 to blockade the Portuguese possessions on the Malabar Coast. The Dutch came into cordial relations with the local rulers of Kerala with the aim of strengthening their trade relations with Kerala and reducing the influence of Portuguese in the local politics of the land.

2.10 Dutch Venture and Adventure

The Dutch made strenuous efforts to gain support from the local rulers in order to erase Portuguese influence from the commercial map of Kerala. The aim of the Dutch was to control the spice trade of the entire region. They made treaties and trade agreements with local rulers in order to monopolies this trade. Antoine Van Diemen, the then Dutch Governor-General (1636 - 1645) made great efforts to maintain good relations with the important princes along the Kerala coast. They had good relations with the Kings of Kayamkulam and of Travancore and also with the Rajas of Kundara, Purakkad, Karunagapally, Chirakkal and Quilon and these rulers reciprocated with goodwill and friendship towards them. They got strong support from the rulers of Tekkumkur, Vadakkumkur and Cranganore and also of the Zamorin of Calicut to seize power in the coastal areas of Malabar.

In May 1642 they negotiated a treaty with the Raja of Purakkad. In 1643 a similar treaty was concluded with Kayamkulam. These rulers agreed to supply the Dutch all the pepper in their dominions in return for such

articles as cotton, iron, tin, opium, sandalwood etc.²⁴ Thus it became evident that it was the commercial motive, viz; the desire to secure monopoly in spices, especially in pepper and not a political one that turned the Dutch into an inveterate enemy of the Portuguese. The enmity ultimately embroiled them in expensive battles sometimes with the Portuguese and other times with the local rulers themselves. Seventeenth century wars in the west coast were broadly speaking, pepper wars. The “Honourable company”, says the Dutch Governor Gollennesse, “Maintains its expensive establishments on their coast for the sake of their grain”.²⁵ In 1661, the Dutch attacked the Portuguese of Quilon with the help of 1200 men from Ceylon. They succeeded in establishing their supremacy and the victory was followed by reckless destruction. It helped them to gain considerable prestige and recognition among the local administrators. The Dutch also had a difficult fight trying to capture power in Cochin from the Portuguese but they won this battle with the help of Zamorin and Paliyath Achan, Prime Minister of Cochin. Van Goen, the Dutch Governor –General (1678 - 1681) was successful in obtaining benefits and privileges from the local rulers which until then had been enjoyed by the Portuguese. It marked the formal acknowledgement of their political and commercial dominance in Kerala, which lasted for about a century. They were pioneers in signing treaties with local rulers with a view to strengthening their trade with these local administrative bodies. The Dutch succeeded in capturing Cochin from the Portuguese on 6 January 1663. Cannanore fell in February 1663.²⁶

²⁴. Op. cit. no. 2, 256.

²⁵. V. Nagam Aiya, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 1, (Thiruvananthapuram: Government Press, 1906), 26.

²⁶. Francis Day, *The Land of Perumals, or Cochin, Its Past and Its Present*, Vol. 1, (Madras: Gantz Brothers, 1863), 115-16.

Thus the Portuguese supremacy power in Malabar came to an end when the Dutch established themselves as the dominant European power on the Malabar Coast. Their desire for pepper monopoly, at times, brought them in collision with the local rulers, including the Zamorin of Calicut. The Dutch power was but short-lived. The rise of Travancore as a formidable power in South Kerala, the Mysore invasion and the conquest of Malabar and the growth of English power led to the decline of the Dutch supremacy in Kerala. In the famous battle of Colachel on 10 August 1741, Marthanda Varma, the ruler of Travancore treacherously defeated the Dutch.²⁷ This battle was of great political significance because the treaty of Mavelikkara signed on 15 August 1753 between Travancore and the Dutch irreparably damaged the prestige of the Dutch.²⁸ The Dutch sold their Fort St. Angelo at Cannanore to Ali Raja in 1771. They also sold Ayacottah and Cranganore Fort to Travancore in 1789. The English attacked the Dutch in 1795 at Cochin and the Fortress of Cochin; the last stronghold of the Dutch in Malabar fell to the English on 20 October 1795.

The Dutch were more business-minded than the Portuguese. It is said that it was they who taught the English that military power must back up trade. Pepper was the chief article of trade, for the monopoly of which they got involved in all sorts of manoeuvring in local politics. They did not hesitate to violate treaty obligations with the local rulers, if it proved advantages to their trade interests. Even though they were not religious

²⁷. For details about the Dutch relations with Travancore see T. K. Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, Vol. 1, (Thiruvananthapuram, Government Press,) 940; A. P. Ibrahim Kunju, *Rise of Travancore: A Study of the Life and Times of Marthanda Varma*, (Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala Historical Society, 1976); P. Shangoony Menon, *A History of Travancore*, (Madras: Government Press, 1878); Regional Records Survey Committee (comp), *The History of Freedom Movement in Kerala*, vol. 1, (Thiruvananthapuram: Government Press, 1970).

²⁸. P. C. Alexander, *The Dutch in Malabar*, (Annamalai: Annamalai University, 1946), 50.

fanatics like the Portuguese, they too tried to subjugate the local powers, not for establishing an empire but for the benefit of their pepper trade. Unlike the Portuguese they did not maintain a huge army. There were instances of their sympathising with the local people. They provided for the treatment of leprosy in the coastal areas, which came within their sphere of influence. A hospital for Leprosy patients was set up at Pallipuram. For the smooth running of their trade they opened two special departments. Their chief items of export, in addition to pepper, included cotton goods, cardamom and tobacco whereas they imported sugar, copper, tin, lead, camphor, silk etc.²⁹ In their military and administrative establishments- they maintained strict discipline.³⁰

Unlike the Portuguese they followed a tolerant religious policy in Kerala. The Dutch were zealous and ardent Protestants and so they were harsh in their attitude towards the Roman Catholics. Immediately after establishing their supremacy in Cochin, they ordered the European Romish priests of the locality to vacate. This was followed by the destruction of many Roman Catholic Churches and convents. The Magnificent Jesuit Library was pulled down. This was perhaps an act of cruelty which even history could never forget. The Dutch traveller Tavernier has condemned it by recording that he saw the Dutch soldiers and seamen “tear several of those beautiful volumes to light their tobacco”.³¹ The Dutch tried to maintain a cordial relation with the Hindus. In an agreement signed with the ruler of

²⁹. Op. cit. no. 6, 267.

³⁰. Op. cit. no.7, 136.

³¹. A. Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History*, (Madras: S. Viswanathan Publishers, 2000), 267; P. N. Chopra and T. K. Ravindran & N. Subrahmanian, *History of South India*, (New Delhi: S. Chand & Company, 1979), 36.

Vadakkumkur in 1740, the Dutch agreed not to do any harm to the temples and cows of that country.

The cordial Dutch relation with Kerala had its positive effects in the politico-economic sphere. It promoted the trade relation between the west and the East. The Dutch merchants purchased lots of textile goods from Irani and Kottar of southern Travancore and sold them in their home country.³² They introduced indigo plantations in these regions, which provided jobs to the indigenous people. They introduced scientific farming in Pappinivattom in Calicut and paved the way for the production of superior quality of coconuts. They also patronized salt manufacturing and production of coconut oil and coir. The Dutch introduced several new varieties of fruits, animals and birds in Kerala. Not only in gardening and furniture manufacturing but also in house constructions and dietetics has Kerala has been very much indebted to the Dutch. The Dutch created conditions favourable for the revival of Kerala trade. They brought into Kerala several expert dyers from Tuticorn and gave them all conveniences and facilities to settle down in Kerala and teach their craft to the native people .The ports of Kerala such as Cochin, Quilon, Anjengo, Colachel and Tengapattanom hummed with brisk activity consequent upon the revival of Kerala economy under the Dutch.³³

The Dutch relations with Kerala produced far-reaching political consequences too. Before their arrival, Kerala had been divided into various principalities ruled over by petty chieftains, who were assisted by Nair Madambis. At the time when the Dutch captured Cochin from the

³². Op. cit. no.7, 136.

³³. Op. cit. no.6, 267.

Portuguese there were four major rulers and 46 Naduvazhis and a large number of Madambis. The powerful presence of the Dutch in coastal Kerala compelled the local rulers including Marthanda Varma to strengthen their kingdoms by annexing the neighbouring petty principalities and play a vital role in the unification of Kerala. Venad's expansion into Travancore is a typical development. The invasion of the Mysore kings was another reason for the decline of the power and influence of the smaller kings of Kerala. The net result was that Kerala was reduced to three Kingdoms: Travancore, Cochin and Calicut. It also led to eclipse of the Naduvazhis and chieftains and the growth of the power of the Monarchs. Socially this new development brought some rays of hopes to the socially suppressed communities of Kerala even though no social revolution was affected in Kerala by the foreign colonisers like the Dutch.

The Dutch contact produced no lasting effect in the educational field. They built no seminaries or educational institutions. But for reconstructing the history of Kerala the accounts left by the Dutchmen like Vischer, Nieuhoff, Linschoten and Baladeus are of inestimable value. In the cultural field Kerala cannot ignore the great contribution made by the Dutch. The greatest achievement of the Dutch in this field was the monumental botanical work 'Hortus Malabaricus'. The drive and initiative for this work was taken by Van Rheed, the Dutch Commissioner General. This book was the product of the combined efforts of Indian and European scholars and was published in Amsterdam in 12 volumes. A low-caste Ezhava scholar Itti Achuthan was the author of this monumental work. Other persons associated with this work include Ranga Bhatt, Vinayaka Bhatt, Appu Bhatt and a monk by name Matheaeus.

The Dutch had strong colonial encampments in different parts of South India. Their first settlement was in Pulicat in 1610. In 1628 they formed a business establishment at Vizagapatnam, which was later burned by the Marathas. The Dutch then built a fort at Vizagapatnam with the permission of the Zamindar of Vizianagaram but then war broke out between the English and the Dutch, which resulted in the defeat of the Dutch but in 1785 it was restored to them. The Dutch also had colonial settlements in Porto Novo, Devanapatnam, and Cuddalore. They built forts at Devanapatnam and Cuddalore. The English and the Dutch were often rivals in gaining control over various parts of Kerala. The Dutch factories at Cuddalore and St. David were transferred to Porto Novo in 1745 and thus it became their stronghold in the Arcot district. The Dutch also had various establishments in the neighbouring district of Godavari. In 1781 the English occupied the Dutch settlements in the Coromandel coast including Jaganatapuram, which were later given back to them. The Dutch settlement in Cochin was instrumental in bringing about favourable changes in the trade affairs of the Dutch. They could effectively control commerce and drive away the Arabs and Portuguese from the coastal areas of Kerala. They were shrewd enough to maintain good relations with the local rulers. The Dutch entered into long term commercial agreements with the rulers of Purakkad, Mangat, Vadakkumkur, Karunagappally, Kayamkulam and Quilon. The sensible approach of the Dutch helped them to monopolise the business of the region and which was their primary aim. They established factories and forts in various districts. A clear picture of the situation is reflected in the words of Lord Palmerston, "The original settlers began with a factory, the factory grew into a fort, the fort expanded into a district, and the district into a

province".³⁴ To put it in a nutshell, the prime objective of the Dutch settlements in South India was to establish gainful trade with these parts of the world. In order to achieve this, they built factories, forts and district quarters, which enabled them to maintain effective control over the whole region.

2.11 Dutch Confrontation with Local Rulers

The Dutch often had serious disputes with local administrators over the way in which they operated their businesses. They interfered in the internal political administration of the native states and too much interference compelled local rulers to turn against them. Hendrik Van Rheede, the Dutch Commander of Cochin acted as the supreme authority by subordinating the authority of the Raja of Cochin, he usurped the power of the Raja making him entirely dependent on the company. Thus the Dutch established a political supremacy and commercial monopoly to handle the complete administration and for that they made different agreements with local rulers. Though there was widespread discontent against the approach of the Dutch, they were successful in enforcing their laws and policies in local administration thereby gaining decisive control in the local affairs of Cochin. The company had full control over the rulers Veera Kerala Varma and Ravi Varma of Cochin and they signed different treaties with them to tighten their grip more and more.

The Dutch also fell out had a dispute with Marthanda Varma the Travancore ruler who had made numerous, unsuccessful attempts to drive them out but in the year 1740 he inflicted a crumbling blow on them damaging their prestige and commercial supremacy. In 1741 he drove the

³⁴. A. B. Keith, *Speeches and Documents on Indian Policy, 1750-1921*, vol. i, 321.

last nail on the coffin of Dutch in the battle of Colachel and imprisoned hundred of Dutch soldiers. This victory is known to be the first and decisive victory of a native power over Europeans on the battlefield. Following this there were extensive peace negotiations and in 1753, a treaty was signed at Mavelikara, which contained several clauses humiliating to the Dutch pride and prestige. In this agreement, it was stated that the Dutch company should in no way interfere in the political affairs of the country and this was a considerable set back to the Dutch military prospects. Thus as the final conclusion of a long period of encounters and confrontations between the Dutch and the other European colonial powers and between the Dutch and native rulers, the Dutch power shrank into a few commercial pockets.

2.12 Dutch Contribution

The Dutch, when compared with the Portuguese, made very little contribution to Indian life. Their primary aim was to promote trade to their best advantage. They paid little attention to initiate progressive measures in the social, administrative or religious sphere that will leave their footprints on the annals of India's cultural progress. Instead, they were content with making financial gains from a brisk trade in India's natural resources.

2.12.1 Trade

It was pepper that drew the Dutch East India Company to Kerala in the middle of the 17th century.³⁵ The Dutch established fruitful trade connections with Kerala. They maintained good relations with the local rulers to promote their commerce. Pepper was the main article of trade and they had good contacts with local producers and monopolized the trade in

³⁵. T.I. Poonen. *A Survey of the Rise of Dutch Power in Malabar (1603-78)*. (Travancore: University of Travancore, 1948), 78-113.

pepper in the region for a considerable period of time. Even though, the confrontation with local rulers had harmful effects on their business ambitions the hunt for business was balanced. They stuck to the favourable treaty obligations and were less interested in buying goods at anything higher than market prices. On the other hand, other competing companies were willing to buy goods by paying higher prices to the producers so much so that the merchants often refused to negotiate with them. The Dutch did not show enough diligence in maintaining their trade and this greatly impeded Dutch commercial progress. New products and scientific methods of cultivation were introduced with a view to improving the agricultural economy. Coconut oil production received an impetus. The Dutch also introduced new industries like salt farming and dyeing. The ports of Kerala such as Cochin, Quilon, Anjengo, Colachel and Tengapattanam hummed with brisk activity upon the revival of Kerala economy under the Dutch. All these are salutary aspects of Kerala's Dutch connection.

2.12.2 Religion

The religious policy of the Dutch was completely different from that of the Portuguese. They showed tolerance towards the Hindu religion and never tried to convert the Hindus to Christianity by force. They respected the religious fervour of the Hindus and even agreed to refrain from cow-slaughter. 'They were prepared to respect the religious susceptibilities of the Hindus, who constituted the bulk of the population in the midst of whom they had to exist and thrive.'³⁶ The chief purpose behind this attitude was to reap commercial success. On the other hand, the Dutch were intolerant towards the Romish priests. They destroyed their churches and convents and

³⁶. Op. cit. no. 2, 37.

even pulled down the Jesuit Library at Cochin but strong and popular agitation made them change the policy and they became more prudent in later years. In 1698, the Carmelite missionaries negotiated lasting peace with the Dutch company and they were permitted to have one Bishop of from their congregation. The Dutch also protected the Roman Catholics of Quilon and safeguarded the Syrian Christians from the domination of Rome. The Dutch showed unshakable respect for the sentiments of the Hindu population. The temples and religious institutions of the Hindus were spared from attack during their military campaigns. It seems that the Dutch did not make any serious attempt to gain recruits for their creed.

2.12.3 Social and Cultural Contributions

The Dutch company exerted a beneficial influence on the social, political and cultural areas of Indian life although trade was their primary goal. They established a strong intellectual rapport with Indian society. Van Rheede, the Dutch Commissioner General, published the distinguished work on Indian Botany “Hortus Malabaricus”. It was prepared by scholars from India and Europe and was published in Amsterdam between 1686 and 1703. Itti Achuthan, the famous Ezhava scholar and Ayurvedic physician was the author of that botanical masterpiece. In comparison with other European traders, the Dutch were good at encouraging an intellectual climate during their colonial period. They were generous in fostering the literary talents of the population to higher standards. Despite their interference in local administration and politics, the Dutch maintained good relations with the local people which strengthened social and political unity in the region.

The Dutch power began to decline with the rise of Travancore in the Southern part of Kerala and the arrival of other European traders.

Marthanda Varma, the powerful ruler of Travancore defeated the Dutch and gained supremacy in the southern parts of Kerala. This encouraged other European powers, especially the British East India Company to set up their establishments in Kerala. The superior military strength and diplomatic skills of the English also helped them to obliterate Dutch superiority from the commercial map of Kerala and the company had to plead with local rulers to safeguard their commercial interests thereafter. Nevertheless the contribution of the Dutch during the colonial period to Kerala's economic progress cannot be underestimated. They were instrumental in boosting trade and commerce in the regions where they had their own establishment though their influence did not last long. They achieved a systematic growth in trade and also formatted a different socio-cultural situation in Kerala

2.13 The Danes

When compared to other Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Norway, Denmark had the lead in mercantile achievements. The Danish East India Company was formed in the year 1616 in Copenhagen and they arrived in India in 1620. With the permission of Nayak Tanjore they settled at Tranquebar 143 miles south west of Madras, thereby succeeding in their venture to secure their first foothold in India.³⁷ As other European traders had done, they too concentrated on foreign trade in order to establish a permanent settlement in India. They built a fort at Tranquebar, calling it Dansborg.

The Danes were less successful in setting up their establishments in the coastal areas of Kerala. The superior military power of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English was responsible for their failure. Denmark had

³⁷. Ibid. 39.

very little manpower capacity and certainly could not compete with any other European power. Besides, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English maintained good relations with the local rulers and these European traders were highly respected and accepted by the local people of the Malabar coast which proved to be a disadvantage for Danish ambitions to establish themselves in the Indian market.

2.14 Danish Settlements

In 1638, the Danes established a trading centre at Pondicherry and gave emphasis to commanding the sea trade along the Coromandel coast. They built factories and fortresses in these coastal areas to fulfill their commercial ambitions. In 1695 they built a factory at Colachel in South Travancore with the support of Queen of Attingal. Another factory was established in Calicut in the year 1752 and these factories were used as storehouses for pepper and spices from these regions. In 1755 the sea washed a larger portion of Danish territory in Tranquebar away. The Danes had often fought with the English and the Dutch on Tranquebar. In 1726 the English established a factory at Edava to promote the pepper supply in this region. But with the support of Marthanda Varma the Danes thwarted this activity. In 1801 the English took Tranquebar and later the Danes finally sold this territory to English for twelve lakh rupees.

The Danes had lucrative trade with Travancore. It is notable that the Danish trade in India depended upon the charitable disposition character of Travancore rulers. Danish settlements in Kovalam were also busy centres for the exchange active exchanges of iron, copper and arms for pepper and coir. The Danish historian Ole Feldback says that "in connection with the attack of the Nawab of Arcot, Muhammed Ali, on Travancore in 1773, the Company

succeeded in getting a very large order for guns, muskets, and ammunition, on condition that the transaction was kept secret from the British East India Company".³⁸ Local rulers to fight their enemies used these arms and ammunitions.

2.15 Danish Contribution

The chief feature of Danish settlement in India was that they focused on commercial activities more than any other European merchants. They were less reluctant to impose their ideas, religious beliefs or customs on the people with whom they had business dealings. The fundamental objective of the Danish settlements in Kerala was to ensure a profitable trade in spice.

2.15.1 Trade

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the Danish merchants had a large share in the profitable pepper business. They made alliances with the local rulers who helped them considerably to collect pepper from the different regions of Travancore and Malabar. Often the Danes clashed with the English over trade interests. To counter this, the Danes always kept good relations with the rulers of Travancore to boost their trade and often waited patiently for the opportunity to win goodwill of the sovereign. They contrived trade policies with Travancore sovereigns to collect pepper from the coastal areas of Kottar, Vizhinjam and Alleppey.

During the last phase of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century there, occurred severe rivalry between the Danes and the English traders. The Danes also had secret business dealings with the British East India Company. It was during this period that the Danes engaged in smuggling, which was one of the significant characteristics of

³⁸. Ibid. 42.

European trade. Danish trade flourished during this period. Their ships carried private cargo on personal accounts, and their connections provided a flourishing business in bills of exchange drawn on financial houses not in Copenhagen, but in Amsterdam, Ostend and even London.³⁹ It has to be acknowledged that the Danish Company had a short life in India. The affluent commercial climate encouraged them to invest and prosper. The Danes arranged loans for the King of Travancore in order to get pepper from that kingdom. Another feature of the Danish trade was smuggling. Though there was severe rivalry between the Danes and the English in trade matters, the Danes depended on English officers for the management of their transactions and entered into secret agreements with them. However, they were fortunate in making huge profits out of their activities. The Danes showed greater spirit of dedication in business than any other European country is a widely accepted fact.

2.15.2 Religious Contribution

Unlike the Portuguese, the Danish merchants were not involved in religious brainwashing. They were receptive to other religious ways and were not concerned with conversions. Even though they played a big role in promoting the activities of the foreign religious missionaries in India, it made little impact on the minds of the local people. The Danish church was an educational institution and the Danish political "offenders" were advised to translate the Bible and even to preach the Gospel in the streets. The British Company supported the religious activities of the Danes. They helped them to establish schools to teach the Bible and catechism. The Danish missionaries

³⁹. Ibid. 44.

were accorded made welcome in South India and Swiss troops used these missionaries to minister to their religious needs.

The growth of the Protestant sect in Tranquebar created an unpleasant situation in the Roman Catholic Church. The great evangelist Christian Frederick Schwartz worked in Tranquebar for seven years. In 1762 he founded a mission at Trichinopoly and later he joined hands with English missionaries and formed the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. By 1753, Tanjore had become a key spot of Protestant missionary activities. Several evangelical missions established centers in Tranquebar and spread their activities to Cuddalore, Madras, Trichinopoly and Palayamkotta. The missionaries in these regions established schools, which provided a new educational platform to promote the education of the weaker sections of the society. The officers of the British East India Company helped them by providing books for the libraries. The London Missionary Society established by William Tobias nourished the religious and socio-cultural attitudes of the Travancore society. His missionary activities spread in Palayamkotta, Tirunelveli and Mylaudy. The subdued missionary spirit of the Danes brought a new refinement to the social life of South India. They were not interested in forceful religious conversions and instead tried to promote friendly relations with other religions.

2.15.3 Socio-cultural Changes

As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, the Danish presence in South India made a distinct impact on the social and cultural lives of the population. The manners, behaviour and general demeanor of the Danes stood out as silver lines in the cloudy colonial sky of Indian history. The Danes were clever at moulding coins that became popular in Indian markets

for considerable period of time. 'Many types of lead, copper and silver coins minted here and in Copenhagen have recently come to light. With its age-long history of devastating floods, Tranquebar's coins are still being uncovered on the beach by heavy storms. Local inhabitants comb the sands there to pick up the remnants of the Danish past in order to supplement their income'.⁴⁰ The Tranquebar beach came to be known as "coin beach" with a long stretch of shoreline of Danish coins and those of local Kingdoms. As the Danes had very few commodities to exchange for goods they used a variety of coins for buying Indian goods from the markets and these coins were in high demand among the Indian merchants. The coins had ships' names and Danish place names the initials T.R and T. B. were used for Tranquebar, DB and DSB for Dansborg, etc. A great boom in trade blossomed during this period; local merchants were paid suitable price for their commodities and their goods were in high demand in the markets. Thus the presence of the Danes in South India brought prosperity, higher standards of living and a sense of wellbeing to the population.

The Danish approach towards politics was something different from that of the Portuguese and the other colonists. They were traders, pure and simple; but purity in purpose and simplicity in performance on the political and commercial plane would not deliver goods, when their rivals, without any qualm of conscience, were engaged in foul play and dissimulation to stabilise their influence in one native state or another.⁴¹ Their moderate policies did not work in places where aggressive political rivalries and collusion existed. Despite these hurdles, the altruistic approach of the Danes

⁴⁰. Ibid. 45.

⁴¹. Ibid. 48.

in India was laudable and praise worthy especially when considered against the unscrupulous practices followed by the other colonists of the period.

2.16 The French

The death of Cardinal Mazarin in 1660 opened Louis XIV to come to the throne in France. Colbert became the Chief Minister of the State. In the year 1664 the French government took the initiative to have colonial enterprises in different parts of world and formed the French East India Company for the purpose. The French government provided financial support to the company to carry out mercantile operations in various parts of the world. 'In the year 1667 Louis XIV dispatched an expedition under Francis Caron to open trade with India. Caron anchored at Cochin, and by the end of the same year, the first French factory was established at Surat'.⁴² The headquarters of the French East India Company was located at Pondicherry under the powerful stewardship of Francois Martin. Pondicherry became the key spot of their operations and venue for their greatest settlement in spite of its hot climate condition. In due course, French colonial presence in the region led to the creation of a sophisticated civilization that enriched the country's ancient culture.

2.17 French Settlements

The French had high ambitions like the English, the Portuguese and the Dutch and strove to build up colonial establishments in various parts of India. With the permission of the King of Golconda they built a factory at Masulipatnam. They conspired with several local rulers to oust the Dutch from power in the Coromandel Coast and to strengthen their own position in these regions. The French had several wars with the Dutch and the Dutch

⁴². A. F. Rudoll Hoernle. & A. Stark Herbert, *The Early History of India*, (New Delhi: Akashdeep Publishing House, 1988), 149.

force was defeated in many places. It was during this period that they occupied a place called St. Thom, near Madras defeating the Dutch. The policies implemented by Francois Martin helped the French to raise settlements in Bijapur, Pondicherry, Villanur and Bahur. He maintained good relations with the local rulers, which helped them to have peaceful trade with these places. He formed negotiations with Sher Lhan Lodi of Bijapur in the Karnatic area and he purchased Pondicherry from him. Thus Pondicherry became the sole place of French power. Martin protected the place from other invasions with the help of native soldiers. In 1675, when the Marathas under the leadership of Sivaji attacked the French force in Pondicherry, Martin sent him back by paying a large sum of money. When there arose a war between the French and the Dutch in 1697 over the right to control Pondicherry, Martin sought the help of his allies and negotiated with the Dutch a treaty known as the 'Treaty of Ryswick' by which the right to Pondicherry was settled in favour of French, who became its undisputed authority.

In 1688, Emperor Aurangazeeb gave Chandranagar in Bengal to the French; and their affairs had so much prospered that when in 1701 the title of Governor of Pondicherry was conferred on Martin, he was in absolute control of land of Masulipatnam, Surat, Chandranagar, Balasore, Dacca, Patna and Cazimbazzar.⁴³ It was during this period that the French gained enormous growth in trade. La Campaigns Royale built up a "loge"⁴⁴ in Kozhikode in 1701. Six years earlier they had tried to set up a loge in

⁴³. Ibid. 151

⁴⁴. A 'loge' was just a building in which goods can be stocked and where the French Company's merchants could reside. It was a "pandikasala" which produced the word "bancassal;" in French documents. A 'loge' was the same as the Portuguese "factoria" and the "factory" of the English East India Company.

Talassery with the permission of the Kolathiri, ruler of Kolathunad, and another at Punnole with permission of Kurungotte Nayar both of which were abandoned, on gaining permission from the Samutiri to build a 'loge' in Kozhikode. In 1725 the French established a new port at Mahi on the Malabar Coast. Later the name Mahi was changed to Mahe to honour La Bourdonnais, who had it as one of his Christian names. Governor Dumas, successor of Lenoir followed the same policies of Martin and maintained good relation with the Nawab of the Carnatic. When the Maratha Raja of Nagpur attacked the Carnatic, the Nawab used the help of Dumas to protect the women and other members of his family. The Marathas defeated the Nawab and asked Dumas to surrender before them. But the French retorted that the Maratha Raja should come and take the families, if they could, from their custody, whereupon the Marathas gave up their demands. The Nizam was greatly impressed by the Frenchman's courage, and he was rewarded with imperial honours, and the official designation of a "Commander of Five Thousand."⁴⁵ Dumas retired in the year 1741 and the celebrated Dupleix became the Director General of French Possessions in India.

2.18 Clash between the French and the British

1741 witnessed severe rivalry between the French and the British. The British had settlements in Madras, on the banks of the Hugli in Calcutta and Fort William, on the west coast of Bombay and also some minor factories at Surat and Pondicherry. Thus the presence of these two European trading communities in these places evoked conflicts between the two. In 1722, the French conspired with the Raja (*Vazhunnavar*) of Kolathunadu, a territory in north Malabar, in order to erect a warehouse by the Mahe River. The English

⁴⁵. D. Innes Arthur, *A Short History of the British in India*, (New Delhi: Inter India Publications, 1902), 47.

who had an earlier settlement in the area and good relations with the place were offended by the decision of the Raja. But the French could construct the factory in Mahe within three months. The attitude of the *Vazhunnavar* led to a clash between the British and the French who were anxious to have monopoly over trade and commerce in the region. Since the Malabar Coast was rich in spices both the powers competed with each other to build up settlements there and tried to please and coax the native rulers. In 1725 *Vazhunnavar* attacked the French at Mahe forcing them to retreat to Kozhikode, with nearly a hundred Frenchmen wounded in action. In December 1725 a French squadron commanded by Pardaillan appeared in the estuary and recaptured the French loge. The young French captain Mahe de Le Bourdonnais serving under Pardaillan was responsible for the success of the French in this encounter. As his name was Mahe de Le Bourdonnais and as the local name had a close similarity to his name, de Pardaillan paid the handsome tribute to his captain by naming the place Mahe. Mahe known as Mayyayi before the fight with *Vazhunnavar* in 1725 was thereafter to be known as to Mahe. The hostilities between the *Vazhunnavar* and the French of Mahe were temporarily halted in November 1726 because of the armed clashes that broke out between the French and the English at Talassery in October 1726.⁴⁶ One of the minor feudatories of the Kolathiri was Kurungotte Nayar who held territories on the northern bank of the Mahe River. His holdings were hemmed in between the French settlement at Mahe and the English factory at Talassery.

When Dupleix the French Governor took charge as the head of French possessions in India, the Austrian War of Succession was all but ready to

⁴⁶. William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, vol. 1, (Madras: Madras Government, 1950,) 358.

break out in Europe. As soon as the war began, the English attacked the French in Pondicherry. As a counter action, to divert the attention of the British, the French attacked Madras. The British appealed to the Nawab to protect their tenants. The Nawab refused, for Dupleix had promised to give Madras to him. Thus Madras fell into the hands of the French and several British tenants were imprisoned. Dupleix refused to honour his promise and this led to the Karnatic War between the French and the Nawab of Karnatic at St. Thomas. The French forces defeated the Indians bringing all southern Indian kingdoms under the French sway. The war boosted the spirits and confidence of the French leading them to believe that they could crush the British. In 1748, the second Karnatic war, which was to settle the succession to the thrones of Haidarabad and Arco, was fought. The French and the English lined up on either side. Chand Sahib secured the support of the French, while the English arrayed themselves behind Muhammed Ali. In 1765 the English, under the leadership of Warren Hastings, captured Chandranagar and Pondicherry from the French. In 1783 the Treaty of Versailles signed in Europe between the two powers forced the English to restore Chandranagar and Pondicherry to the French but the latter had to give up all hope of acquiring an empire in India. All that remained with them were Chandranagar, Karikkal, Mahe, Ganam and Pondicherry.

2.19 Impact of the French Colonization

The French status as a prominent western power in India ended with the third Karnatic war and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, but their French influence endured; their settlements remained centres of French culture. Even the name 'Pondicherry' was given by the French. From small beginnings it grew into a prosperous settlement, with French manners,

customs and political practices.⁴⁷ The French were interested not just in pepper and other spices; they were also interested in the export of slaves from the east and west coasts of South India. The French Company settled French colonists in the islands of the Arabian Sea like Madagascar, Bourbon, Reunion where they cultivated indigo, jute, cotton, coffee and tea and where they employed slaves to work on their plantations. Trade in slaves was major cause of friction that led to strained relations between the *Vazhunnavar* and the French at Mahe within two years of the agreement of 1721.⁴⁸

2.19.1 Political Influence

The French contribution to India was mainly political and of more value to the English than to the people of India. It was one, partly of policy, partly of military organization.⁴⁹ They made the people of their settlements citizens of France, conferring on them political equality. They had established excellent rapport with the local people, sharing good times and bad with them. They made alliances with neighbouring Indian provinces and established political treaties with them to boost their trade. The successful rule of Francois Martin helped the French to establish good relations and contacts with the political authorities of the Karnatic and the southern areas of India. .

The French were the first European power to train Indian soldiers in European methods of warfare on a large scale. They trained them how to use modern weapons, how to keep their troops healthy whilst on the march, the planning and logistics work required; in short all the strategies of war and in fact some of these fighting techniques are still practiced in India today.

⁴⁷. Op. cit. no. 2, 117.

⁴⁸. Op. cit. no. 46, 352.

⁴⁹. Op. cit. no. 13, 49.

2.19.2 Religious Spheres

The French East India Company started their evangelical operation in India during the seventeenth century. In South India Capuchin missionaries took the lead in promoting the Roman Catholic faith in these areas through the 'Carnatic Mission' the chief instrument by which the French evangelical work was conducted. They converted more than one million men and women of South India to Christianity. The missionaries moved with the people and the great works they produced had considerable social and economical impact on the people. An important task carried out by the missionaries was to cleanse the religious practices of the indigenous population of their senseless and sometimes barbaric customs and traditions. 'The monumental work on Hindu Customs and Manners by Abbe Dubois, one of the missionaries who came to India in 1792, needs special mention. This work is of immeasurable value to us, which according to Max Muller, was the work of a "man remarkably free from theological prejudices."⁵⁰ French missionaries also engaged in charitable works, they established schools and hospitals to help the poor and to raise them to a self-sustainable level.

2.19.3 Social and Cultural Changes

The French colony operating from Pondicherry was instrumental in bringing about many salutary changes on the socio-cultural spheres of South Indian society. Compared to other European powers, they were the most successful in transforming a medieval society into a varied modern culture. They built up educational institutions where they taught local subjects. They established colleges in Madras, Trichinopoly, Palayam Cottah, Bangalore and

⁵⁰. Op. cit. no. 2, 117.

Mysore and at least eighty high schools and hundreds of elementary schools, convents, orphanages and industrial schools.⁵¹

The French also made great literary contributions. They took pains to learn the South Indian languages like Tamil and Malayalam. The first Sanskrit grammar in a European language was published in French. They published several books in Tamil from the School of Oriental Languages. Julien Winson's Grammar of Tamil, Book of Tamil Studies and Aureil's collections of rare Tamil Manuscripts are the major works done by this institute. They also translated several French books into Tamil and Malayalam. French linguistic and literary influence is noticeable even in modern Malayalam works. The missionaries of the Madurai Mission published "Meditations on God" in seven volumes, which is still in use amongst the Christians of South India.

Thus a medieval society witnessed astonishing changes in social, economic and political spheres, resulting from the French colonization. These changes had a far-reaching impact on the educational progress of society.

2.20 Conclusion

As a concluding observation it has to be highlighted that European colonial rule from that of the Portuguese to the supremacy of the British has had a tremendous influence in the social, cultural and economic fields of Kerala society. So far we have seen the influence of the Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes and the French colonial powers in Kerala. The Portuguese impact on the Christian missions in Kerala will be analysed in the fourth chapter. The predominance of the British East India Company in India over other European colonial enterprises is most obvious in every sphere of Indian life. The next chapter deals exclusively with the role of the British in

⁵¹ . Ibid. 117.

effecting a socio-cultural transformation in Kerala. The detailed study has revealed that western civilization, in all its forms, had and still has a great influence over traditional culture of Kerala society.

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